

*Notes on the differences between modern and pre-modern Yoga.* (This is a **draft** which should be used complying with fair usage with citation). Monograph being readied.

Modernity<sup>1</sup> when invoked within Yoga is problematic because it implies the logic of late capitalism to the here and the now within the study of Yoga. But Yoga classically began with the idea that one ought to subdue the modifications of the mind, understood not as Sigmund Freud understood the mind but as say Georg Feuerstein<sup>2</sup> understood the mind. Not even how Carl Gustav Jung understood the mind. Further in pre-modern Hatha Yoga as in classical Yoga; we have a stress on controlling the mind by normatively physical means. For instance, in the *Gorakhsamhita*<sup>3</sup> we find that the stress is that through the performance of various physical postures one activates the various nadis which have no equivalent term in English which is a dualist language. The fate of modernist Yoga has been to make it indeed an inhuman process of postures and meaningless breathe control which leads to a culture of the sarx against the desired Pauline culture of the pneuma. One refers to Saul of Damascus since as the Hindu Scriptures say; the truth is One, but the sages call it by many names. Modern Yoga as performed, and not practised, in the West and in India today is akin to mindfulness praxes without Buddhism<sup>4</sup>. Or as this author showed in *Prabuddha Bharata*, July 2020, it is like

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<sup>1</sup> The problematics of modernity can be elided easily with taking recourse to the present moment. But then that beggars a more difficult question: what is the nature, or the whatness of the present; an easier approach is to attempt it through the political modernism posited by Jean-François Lyotard's (1924–1998) *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). This is the simplest approach. And, like all simple approaches, it is reductionist being structuralist. Now, of course, the posthuman gawks at us through the images of PPE wearing doctors and the virus which we cannot see. Only hear of. This is the modernism that Lyotard mistook as postmodernism. A better explanation comes from a leftist thinker. But modernity implies psychoanalytic tropes; which are to be rejected since they are epistemic errors and not because they are Western concepts.

<sup>2</sup> Feuerstein is one of the very few Western scholars who understood Yoga and Tantra. A good beginning is his *The Psychology of Yoga: Integrating Eastern and Western Approaches for Understanding the Mind*, 2014. All his books including monographs should be compulsorily read before even another lecture on Hinduism is given anywhere in the world. I mention him at the end of <https://philpapers.org/rec/CHARSD>.

<sup>3</sup> Swami Vishnuswaroop's infantile edition is to be avoided. Kindle edition consulted. Utter waste of time.

<sup>4</sup> Coursera has a course which has thrown the numinous out of Buddhism and the professor peddles his version of mindfulness.

Bihani Sarkar<sup>5</sup> studying Sanskrit literature to conclude her nonsense about Shiva. Yoga in the West, as Georg Feuerstein understood it, is relevant even today to India when the late Feuerstein is no more. Modern yoga as practised globally is largely a capital intensive, non-missiological gymnastics held for academic brownie points in the First World. Whereas all, with no exception, classical Hindu, Jaina and Buddhist texts on Yoga including the *Gheranda Samhita* stress on siddhis leading to absolute monism. Whereas contemporary and modernist Yoga is Bikram Yoga or Desikachar Yoga or, Sivananda Yoga. The *Bhagavad Gita* too as this examiner is aware speaks of various Yogas; where does it speak much of postures? The *Gorakhsamhita* for instance, speaks of the khechari mudra. One has learn how to do that mudra; and not first read James Mallinson's book<sup>6</sup> on this mudra. So, we now discuss in some detail how hermeneutics<sup>7</sup> plays a huge role in helping us see the disenchantment of the West with the East so to force a break between that which is modernist, modern and contemporary within Yoga and that which is pre-modern. By modern, one further means a totalitarian system mapped by Hannah Arendt. By pre-modern one indicates that era just before the rise of the Nazis. We have to use Western qua Continental categories to access this disjuncture because this paper is in English which is inherently a dyadic language where the relation between the signifier and the signified is always arbitrary. And Yogic texts, all pre-modern Yogic texts; are inherently based on what Hindus call mantras and the Chinese call dharanis. There is a non arbitrary relationship between the Sanskrit alphabet and the Matrikas. For a study on this, the best available source is Mark Dyczkowski. One must be careful not to slot Dyczkowski as a

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<sup>5</sup> For what it is worth see <https://philpapers.org/rec/CHAROH-9> ; Sarkar has not bothered studying anything in depth. The reviewed book had a hand written note to give a favourable review. Absolute discredit to those places which peer reviewed her etc. *Prabuddha Bharata* will last half a millennium more. There I have proved her to be just another scholar. No idea about anything. And I was peer reviewed and lawyers consulted by the Ramakrishna Mission before they published my review of her. A disgrace to SOAS and Oxford University.

<sup>6</sup> See James Mallinson's excellent *The Khecarividya of Adinatha: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of an Early Text of Hathayoga*. Let us not slot it as Tantra just because it is within Routledge's Tantric Tradition series. Mallinson is an excellent scholar. But those who teach him are let us put it kindly; not worth my time.

<sup>7</sup> <https://indiancatholicmatters.org/part-i-why-we-need-to-revisit-the-word-of-god-preliminaries/> this is where I annotate the Bible through the Tantras.

Kashmiri Shaivite since within Western reader response criticism; the author is dead. The text is ours to interpret and make a mess of; within religious studies, at least. Again this reviewer nearly puked (language not befitting an academic paper; but in this COVID 19 world; new rules apply) reading [Sarah Jacoby on Sera Khandro](#). Similarly; this author is very cautious in seeing Eastern, Hindu texts misinterpreted by Europeans. One good example would be to study *Absorption* by Johannes Bronkhorst. Bronkhorst in all sincerity proves that Buddhism predates Hinduism. Whereas the Buddhist (of all varieties) and the Hindu knows that these divisions are academic divisions to earn doctorates and accolades much in the same way as Jesus has been thrown out by John Dominic Crossan in the name of his puerile Jesus Seminars.

Since this examiner is tired of hearing of Patanjali and references to Karl Potter's encyclopaedias and theories on Tantra; let this paper now show the power and facticity of yoga as given in even the Jain Yoga literature: one example would be Acharya Haribhadrāsuri's *Yogaḍṛṣṭisamuccaya*. David Gordon White does not quite get it: there is nothing sinister about Yogas or Yogis. Because he builds on Wendy Doniger's theodicy which is more Kantian than Hindu; he errs. A sincere practitioner of Tantra or Kashmiri Shaivism or Sri Vidya or even Vedanta can actually manipulate space and time. This will not get anyone doctorates or good scores but this is the truth. One could carry on parsing words in the *Gheranda Samhita* in the best structuralist and Gadamerian manner to no avail. The greatest difference between Yoga now and Yoga then are the siddhis. One does not do pranayama to get good lung capacity to become an immortal. One does pranayama to activate the ida and pingala and to become Harih. The Wikipedia entry on Hari OM had been corrected by this author and one can see the real sense of the qualia Hari there. So, the logic of late capitalism has made Yoga now integral to survival during COVID 19 lockdowns. The old books on Yoga stress that instead of seeing darkly through a glass now; Yoga shows us as it were in a flash, the Truth(s) of the past, future in every possible universe within the bubbling multiverses. Let us not get excited about a flash

and think we are talking of Vajrayana. This author knows a Shakta Tantric who is a Vedic Brahmin with children and chaste; who can enter into the examiner and the examined and read both their deepest desires. He understand what nyasa is; he is like a Hesychast with the difference that he has become a god while worshipping God. In his case, Maa Shitala. And the Mahavidyas. Yoga as given in the Hatha Yoga texts, if studied with the shraddha of Totakacharya towards Shankaracharya; then they reveal the way to become a god ready to merge with nirguna Brahman. Contemporary Yoga as practised in India and one suspects the world over; is devoid of nyasa and is more akin to body building and thus has become mechanical and totalitarian; consisting of set routines. Edwin Bryant, for all his brilliance insists that Sage Patanjali means vegetarianism by ahimsa. That is unconscious Abrahamic rant. Bryant and Srila Prabhupada<sup>8</sup> are not greater than Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo or Swami Saradananda<sup>9</sup> or Ramana Maharshi or this author's Guru Deva. The last is a vegetarian but in the best Hindu way allows his chela; this author to eat whatever he wishes. In fact, there is a reason Sri Prabhupada and Bikram (who learnt stuff from Bishtu Ghosh) Yoga etc. are not popular in India. They are too modernist in Arendt's sense. The khechari mudra does not demand celibacy but chastity. The western world and now the world at large are preoccupied by the libidinal; but to even write on that makes the tanmatras<sup>10</sup> change. This insistence on the reality of tanmatras is found in pre-modern yoga. This, sadly is lacking in all OCHS courses. So Bishtu Ghosh taught about tanmatras altering and not about Samkhya; Bikram, poor fellow made a doctrine out of it and used Yoga to abuse women. The tanmatras changed and he is proven to be not a sham but outright evil. Radically so. Unlike him, Iyengar and earlier

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<sup>8</sup> One eka dandin sannyasin wrote to this author about Srila Prabhupada badmouthing Swami Vivekananda. I saw it on YouTube too. Off he goes from any serious spiritual or academic discussion except someone who got a bunch of hippies around him and continues to spoil our kids and ethnically discriminate against Indians at Mayapur.

<sup>9</sup> Swami Saradananda was a celibate and practised Tantra. Because this is an academic paper, one cannot write: duh, go figure.

<sup>10</sup> Again tanmatras are not Samkhya's own patrimony.

Desikachar had the prudence to insist on all the multiple limbs of Yoga being followed; the examiner knows that there are more and even less than eight limbs of Yoga. This insistence is not there in the virtual world. COVID 19 is here to stay and to do group Yoga or anything but online *satsangs* are prudent. Anything offline will kill everyone. One has to remember that this is the Kali Yuga and anything before the Nazis stretches to hundreds of years. *Prabuddha Bharata* where this author is a commissioned reviewer and essayist will outlast the examiner and the examined because other than the Vatican nobody has the resources to archive writings in the coming two hundred years: there this author after carefully considering the textual evidence of the dating of the *Tantras*, concluded that it is like dating *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* was written in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD but composed thousands of years earlier as proven by the Sutton Hoo archaeological evidence. Similarly, though not quite the same; one sees a living Yantra and deduces that Yoga predates aeons and some of it was actually written when scholars say they were written. So, premodern Yoga is about altering the tanmatras and then to attain all the siddhis; there are Vedantic siddhis too as the examiner knows; and then to become free from the cycle of unending births and rebirths. First one has to become that which sees without having eyes and hears without ears<sup>11</sup> and make sure that one is not bogged down by the abracadabra of Sarah Jacoby and Bihani Sarkar. Whether this author is failed by the examiner; he does not care but his comments on Jacoby and her ilk over the last ten years will be read when Princeton University shuts shop. How long will the WASPs pay for Hindu studies there? No wonder that Father Clooney is the Hindu Studies' person at Harvard. Clooney chooses to keep mum about his Jesuit Brothers' liking for young boys. So Clooney escaped into his version of Hinduism. So at the cost of failing; one writes the truth; because unlike the jesting Pilates of this world including Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade; this author refuses to ask of Christ: quid est veritas? The truth is very clear to this author. That premodern Yoga is the

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<sup>11</sup> *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*

Truth and the virtual Yoga now is just a Baudrillard generated simulation. What the team at *Prabuddha Bharata* agreed with; where Jung published and Spivak eagerly wrote, cannot be better than word-parsing in this and other courses at OCHS. For instance, did Sri Utpaladeva exist? I know he did; I don't need to read Sharda Bettina Bäumer. Though, she gets it right.

To cut a long story short; pre-Nazi Yoga was about Dharma. Now Yoga is about nothing. Just meaningless lectures and pranams (not pranayama) and bare survival like a homo sacer during COVID 19 Lockdowns.